

Andrew Jackson to Martin Van Buren, April 10, 1830, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

MEMORANDUM ON THE FRENCH SPOLIATION CLAIMS, ETC.¹

¹ This memorandum is in Jackson's handwriting.

April 10, 1830.

Private and for Mr Van Burens own eye.

I have examined Mr Rives despatch, hastily. I am clearly of opinion that all kind of mixed commissions ought to be avoided if possible by agreeing to a gross sum to be paid for all spoliations, committed by France and [on?] our commerce, from a certain date to the present, say for instance six millions of dollars, if that sum will be sufficient to cover all the *just* claims of our citizens, and let commissioners be appointed by the United States to adjudicate, all the claims of our own citizens against France; and when adjudicated apportioned agree[e]able to the amount thus stipulated to be paid. This mixed commission will be both tedious and expensive and ought to be avoided if possible. But if Mr Rives should find that the French minister would prefer leaving it to this mixed commission, it appears to me, that one commissioner and arbitrator, on each side, would be sufficient, and in the event of disagreement, the arbitrator selected by lot to determine—three men will dispatch business more expeditiously than five, and with as much justice. Still I am in favor of a gross sum which will cover all our just claims for time is every thing for merchants and if a gross sum is agreed upon our merchants will receive their money in half the time that a mixed commission will pass upon and settle the claims.

Library of Congress

On the subject of our negotiation with great Britain, we ought to be prepared to act promptly in case of a failure. We have held out terms of reconciling our difference with that nation of the most Frank and fair terms—Terms, if England really had a wish to harmonise, and act justly towards us, ought to have been meet in that spirit of frankness and candor and friendship with which we proposed them. These terms being rejected our national character and honor requires that we should now act with that promptness and energy due to our national character. Therefore let a communication be prepared for congress recommending a non intercourse law between the United States and Canady, and a sufficient number of Cutters commanded by our naval officers and our midshipmen made revenue officers, and a double set on every vessel, etc. etc. This adopted and carried into effect forthwith and in six months both Canady and the Westindia Islands will feel, and sorely feel, the effects of their folly in urging their Government to adhere to our exclusion from the West India trade

Will Mr. Van Buren Think of these sugestions and see me early on monday to confer upon this subject